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Harry Mitchell

Like many of my fellow Buffaloes, I have tremendous pride in Tempe High, the school I graduated from in 1958 and taught at for nearly three decades.

My time as a student, teacher, student council and Key Club adviser, freshman football coach, and even bus driver at Tempe High helped make me who I am today. As we prepare to celebrate Tempe High's centennial, I know I'm not alone.

Tempe High's anniversary is special because, in many ways, the school grew up and came of age with the community. Those who know the school's history know that the city's namesake school has played an important role in shaping and strengthening our community.

The school's first building was at the southeastern corner of Mill Avenue and University Drive, right in the heart of downtown. When I was a kid, I rode my bike by the school all the time, whether exploring with friends or on my paper route.

As I grew up, so did Tempe and Tempe High. As I prepared to go to high school, the need for more capacity pushed the city and the school south. My graduating class was the first to attend the new campus, at Mill Avenue and Broadway Road, each of our four years.

The school was actually built on county land and some in town complained that the 2-mile move was too far. Sometimes, my friends and I stopped at Maple Avenue and 10th Street to "hitchhike" to school. One of our classmates or a teacher usually picked us up and spared us the walk.

Certainly, there has been a great deal of change over the years. I remember how exciting it was for our school to play football games at ASU's stadium - Goodwin Stadium - until a stadium was built on the high school campus.

Tempe has grown so much that there is no longer one high school in town. Still, much remains the same.

Throughout the years, Tempe High has always enjoyed a diverse student body with students from all walks of life. And just like those who came before them, students from today's classes will return to become teachers at the school. Many will go on to become successful business leaders, university professors and community leaders.

One of the reasons Tempe High holds such a special place in my heart is that my wife, Marianne, and I started dating while I was a student. Marianne attended North High School in Phoenix, and while we couldn't see each other during the week, we had a daily lunchtime ritual

that kept us connected.

Every day at noon, Marianne would call the same pay phone on campus and we would check in with each other. I was lucky enough to persuade her to go to the Tempe High dances with me, too.

After we married, Marianne and I taught at Tempe High, and each had our daughter, Amy, and our future son-in-law, in our classes.

Because of my Tempe roots, I enjoyed teaching there more than I probably would have enjoyed teaching somewhere else. I loved the students, and the connection we shared through our community.

Tempe High played an important role in my political career, too. It was a fellow teacher who strongly encouraged me to run for the City Council in 1970. And I'm convinced that being a teacher helped make me a better mayor.

I'm proud of the role Tempe High has played in our community, and I'm honored to have been a part of it. I'll always feel a special connection with my fellow Buffaloes, and I'll always smile when I hear the cheer, "Go, Buffs."

Harry Mitchell, a Democrat, represents Arizona's 5th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.